

## Message Text

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S E C R E T SANA 1986

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: YE, US, PFOR

SUBJ: ACTING FONMIN DISCUSSES IMPLICATIONS OF ARAB-ISRAEL HOSTILITIES FOR US-YAR RELATIONS

1. ACTING FONMIN ASNAG AND MINISTER FOR DEVELOPMENT SA'ID VISITED ME EVENING OCTOBER 8. IN A SERIOUS AND SOMBER MOOD THEY DISCUSSED IMPLICATIONS OF CURRENT ARAB-ISRAEL HOSTILITIES FOR US-YAR RELATIONS.

2. YEMENIS, ASNAG SAID, HAVE BECOME GENERALLY SKEPTICAL ABOUT CHEST-POUNDING OF ARAB STATES TO NORTH. THEY ARE NOT MUCH CONCERNED WITH ARAB-ISRAEL PROBLEM, PREFERRING TO CONCENTRATE ENERGIES ON THEIR OWN DESPERATE PROBLEMS OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT. 1973 IS NOT 1967 WHEN EGYPTIANS WERE IN CONTROL IN YEMEN AND DELIBERATELY FANNED ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT. BUT YEMENIS ARE ARABS. DEVELOPMENTS OF PAST TWO DAYS HAD STIRRED THEIR EMOTIONS. IF TIDE OF WAR NOW BEGAN TO GO AGAINST EGYPT AND SYRIA, AS IT PROBABLY WOULD IN VIEW ISRAELI AIR SUPERIORITY, SENTIMENT AGAINST US, AS ISRAEL'S PROVIDER AND BACKER, WOULD MOUNT.

3. CURRENT SITUATION, ASNAG REMARKED, WOULD INEVITABLY SET BACK SOMEWHAT THE COURSE OF USG-YARG RELATIONS AND PROGRAMS OF COOPERATION. OBJECTIVE SHOULD BE TO LIMIT THE DAMAGE SO THAT WE COULD GET ON WITH PRO-

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GRAMS AFTER THE STORM HAD BLOWN OVER. IT PARTICULARLY

IMPORTANT THAT ANY INCIDENT INVOLVING EMBASSY PREMISES OR AMERICAN PERSONNEL BE AVOIDED. YARG INTENDED KEEP ITS FINGERS ON PULSE OF POPULAR SENTIMENT ESPECIALLY IN THE SCHOOLS WHICH PRINCIPALLY STAFFED BY EGYPTIAN AND SYRIAN TEACHERS. IF EMOTIONS SEEMED TO BE RISING DANGEROUSLY, YARG WOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN SUGGESTING A PUBLIC RALLY--TO BE SAFELY CONTAINED IN THE SANAA FOOTBALL STADIUM. CURRENTLY, ASNAG SAID, DISCUSSIONS TAKING PLACE WITH MILITARY LEADERS TO PROVIDE DISCREETLY STEPPED-UP PROTECTION TO US, BRITISH AND FRENCH EMBASSIES. US EMBASSY, UNFORTUNATELY, WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE TARGET NUMBER ONE.

4. COMMENTING MORE GENERALLY, ASNAG SAID THAT WHEN HE HAD FIRST LEARNED THAT WAR HAD BROKEN OUT AT ARAB INITIATIVE AND THAT EGYPTIANS HAD CROSSED THE CANAL, HE HAD HOPED THAT FOR FIRST TIME IN 25 YEARS THERE MIGHT

ACTUALLY BE PROSPECT OF A GREAT MIDDLE EAST PEACE, IF EGYPT COULD REGAIN EVEN SOME SMALL PORTION OF LOST TERRITORY, THRICELY-DEFEATED ARABS COULD HOLD UP THEIR HEADS AND NEGOTIATE REALISTICALLY. EGYPT'S RE-ACQUISITION OF BEACHHEAD EAST OF CANAL WOULD NOT ENDANGER ANY REAL ISRAELI SECURITY INTEREST. IF, AS NOW SEEMED LIKELY, EGYPTIANS AND SYRIANS WERE THROWN BACK BY AN ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DETERMINED ON FULL VENGEANCE, POST-HOSTILITY NEGOTIATIONS WOULD BE MOST UNLIKELY TO GET DOWN TO FUNDAMENTALS.

5. COMMENT: I WAS CONSIDERABLY TOUCHED BY ASNAG AND SA'ID VISIT WHICH I THOUGHT CHARACTERIZED THE RATHER SPECIAL CONSIDERATENESS, FRIENDSHIP AND COMMON SENSE WHICH SET THE YEMENIS APART.

6. ASNAG AND I AGREED WE WOULD STAY CLOSELY IN TOUCH. WAR HAS PUT HIS PLANS FOR NEW YORK VISIT IN LIMBO BUT HE STILL HOPES MAKE TRIP WHEN DUST CLEARS.  
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